

MEMORIES OF A DOCTOR

By GEORGE KIBBE TURNER

Author of "The Last Christian."

IV.—The Taking of Alexandra

I SAT in my office, exactly as I do now. The door was slightly open, and Mrs. Spencer Oelrichs Peck, who had been in the papers, five feet two, and a hangily eye and street clothes severe to the point of pom.

"It is my belief that he is killing him," she exclaimed.

"Who?" I asked, jumping up.

"Orlando J. Heckel."

"Heckel?" I said.

"The health man," said Mrs. Peck. "Oh!" I said, I caught it then.

"He has exhausted now. He can't sleep nights. He lies awake and moans, his legs ache."

"Mr. Peck, you mean?" I suggested.

"Precisely what I mean," she said. "Mr. Peck! No one can tell me it's suitable for a man of his age—this chase, this hunter's exercise—what do you call it? I have never heard of anything like it in my life."

"I don't know that I know," I said.

"I know," said Mrs. Peck. "He is running him to his death. That's what he's doing."

"Where did he get hold of him?" I asked.

"Where? In one of those health-food resorts. You know. Those places on Lexington avenue where they serve peanut roasts and jump cutters. Elephants, isn't it? Heaven knows," she continued, "where Spencer will go after health."

That was true. Spencer Peck, since he had retired from business at fifty-five with a weak digestion, has been a desperate adventurer over three continents in search of health.

"I have talked to him?"

"Hours—days. What good does that do? Now, I've come here for this purpose," continued Mrs. Peck. "I want you to see this performance. That's the first thing. Then we can judge."

"I shall be here to get you at 6 o'clock tomorrow morning. Yes, that is the hour when it occurs. Will you be ready? Very well, then!"

"Here is the book," she continued, and crowded into my hands a pamphlet. "Here—take it, read it, and tell me what it's about! I can't make head nor tail out of it. It's balderdash, I believe; that's my opinion."

"She moved abruptly toward the door. 'I would have given a hundred thousand dollars rather than have this happen,' she said."

I stood there with Orlando J. Heckel's health volume in my hand, glanced at its title, and sat down at once and acquainted myself with its contents. You have probably never seen this work. It has been withdrawn from circulation now. I understand. A pamphlet and much more—published in one of those pamphlet shops in one of the information centers on the East Side.

At 6 o'clock, the next morning, Mrs. Peck was at the door, sitting stiffly in one corner of her limousine. It was a damp blue October morning. The sun was barely up.

"The reservoir, Central Park," ordered Mrs. Peck.

It was a somewhat depressing time and situation.

"How was he—Mr. Peck, last night?" I asked.

"Another bad night," said Mrs. Peck shortly. "Have you read it?" she proceeded.

"Yes."

"Very well. What is it about?"

"This book?" I began.

"What is the title of it, again?" asked Mrs. Peck.

"Classic Health," I said.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Peck. "Go on."

"This book," I said, "is divided into four chapters. The first is entitled 'Establishing a Norm.' In this the writer states that it is his first purpose to discover a norm."

"Of exercise," I explained.

"Yes," said Mrs. Peck politely. "Go on."

"The second chapter, entitled 'Up from Anemia,' purports to give the author's personal experience in discovering a natural system of exercises. It saved his life."

Mrs. Peck snorted.

"The other two chapters vary out his discoveries—the first for men, the second for women. The first of these, I take it, is what interests us—'For Man, for Chariot.'"

"Hunting—hunting," exclaimed Mrs. Peck.

"You have it," I said. "For the female male is a hunter. For the female, I said, 'the program is slightly different. He believes her norm of existence to be the dance.'"

"In the next place," said Mrs. Peck, "taking a very different angle. I consider it innocent."

"What?" I asked.

"This going about with no clothing, or worse than none."

who wore his hair in the demi-mane so generally admired by health reformers. His great physique crowded every fiber of his cotton running suit. Several paces behind him, his disciple, Spencer Oelrichs Peck—the mere pod of a man—labeled with the dreary, indomitable obstinacy of the hopeless hypochondriac in pursuit of health.

"You see," said Mrs. Peck, to me, with savage dryness. "What did I tell you? He is tottering—tottering with fatigue."

So he was. It was pitiable; I never saw a man so thin. How many hundred miles, I wondered, had that huge animal dragged that poor hypochondriac around that reservoir in pursuit of health?

"I shall speak to him," said Mrs. Peck.

"Here, here—come here!" she cried. "I want to see that man. No, not you, Spencer. That man! Here, blow that horn!" she said to the chauffeur.

She had her way, of course. They descended, Mr. Heckel, slumping on a sleek, like Thor coming down the Scandinavian hills—health radiating from his exposed surfaces, a pink aura in the blue morning. Mr. Peck, shrunk into the background, introduced him.

"Madam, good morning," said Mr. Heckel, advancing a highly muscular leg, and bowing to Mrs. Peck with all the grace of a dancing master.

"Good morning! Good morning! Good morning!" said Mr. Heckel to me, and squeezed my fingers to strings.

"What a morning!"

"Do you know what you are doing?" she said, and fixed a baleful glance upon his face.

"Exactly, madam," said Mr. Heckel broadly. "I am drinking in health and joy from this magnificent morning."

"You are killing my husband," "What?" shouted Mr. Heckel.

"You heard me. I said you were killing my husband."

Mr. Heckel advanced. "You say this?" he exclaimed. "How do you know?"

"You are going to stop it, and you will stop it now," said Mrs. Peck.

"How do you know? Answer me," persisted Mr. Heckel. "How? Who are you? Are you a student of health?"

Each one pursued unswervingly the line of his own thought.

"I want to begin Mrs. Peck."

Her voice was quenched at its source.

"Stop! Are you a student of health? Come, let us be reasonable," shouted Orlando J. Heckel. "Tell me—I want to know. Have you health? Have you knowledge of nature's law? Who are you? By what right do you speak on these things?"

"Who am I?" exclaimed Mrs. Peck, speech failing her.

"Who?" repeated Mr. Heckel, squarely planted before her. "Answer. No, I will tell you. You are an elderly woman in torpid health. I will tell you the truth—for your own good. You hear little truth; I see that."

"Madam," went on Mr. Heckel, "let me look at you frankly as you are. What are you? You are a poor victim of our so-called civilization. You lack oxygen. You sleep badly. Your stomach is replete. Why not? You are full of waste products. Madam," said Mr. Heckel, shaking his finger in her face, "you are a tomb. A tomb of waste products. Your skin is clogged, your eyes are dull. Can you look upon God's morning through such panes as those, and rejoice? Can you? Answer me. Can you?"

"If yes," said Mrs. Peck, answering the last, "have I lost me for half a century. They still serve me to recognize a mimicry."

"My dear, my dear!" said Mr. Heckel, for the first time entering the conversation.

"Will you come home with me, Spencer, and leave this madman?" asked Mrs. Peck, disregarding Mr. Heckel.

"I must have my toning up, my dear," said Mr. Heckel doggedly.

There was a slight pause. I looked ahead; and, as I did so, my eyes fell upon the footman on the left side of the front seat. I had never seen such an expression of sadness in human eyes.

Mr. Heckel stood facing Mrs. Peck, his great arms folded, the muscles in his square jaws at work.

"Madam," he said, in a fine, lofty spirit, "your temper is nothing to me. You are an intelligent woman, very well. Consider what I say. I am curing your husband as you see. Sooner or later you will come to me, and I shall cure you of these nervous attacks—of your sick, enfeebled, and unbalanced nerves."

He stopped and looked earnestly at Mrs. Peck.

"Incredible!" said Mrs. Peck, with the recovered gift of speech, and is pleased to know it. "Incredible!"

She turned sharply upon Mr. Heckel. "Spencer," she said, thrusting each word carefully in to the light, "you should see yourself in that costume. You look exactly like a sick man."

I had known that Mrs. Peck was a plain-spoken woman—none more so—and prided herself upon the fact. But I had never heard her under a real stimulus before. Mr. Heckel did hold his mouth slightly ajar when he breathed.

And you, sir," Orlando Heckel—in that instant's underware you look like a bag full of doorknobs."

There was something to be said for her figure of speech. The muscular development of Mr. Heckel was almost jagged in places.

"Disgusting, disgusting," soliloquized Mrs. Peck. "There should be a law against such indecency. I wonder you are allowed at large in this public park. Drive on, drive on," she called to the chauffeur.

"Remember," said Mr. Heckel, looking fixedly in her eyes, "you will come to me. I will cure you of these nervous attacks."

He stood looking at her until we started; then turned and clambered up the side of the reservoir, his pupil following.

Mrs. Peck had the appearance of a person slowly strangling.

"Me," she said—"me! You heard his language to me."

"Was I right? Is he killing him? Is he exercising him to death?" asked Mrs. Peck.

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"You are right," I said.

"That great, hulking out!" said Mrs. Peck. "I believe it is a pleasure to him to die, and never know it."

"It is much the same process," I said, "as tying a horse to the end of a railroad train. Your husband's arteries—"

"His arteries!" exclaimed Mrs. Peck. "His arteries are not so young."

"Will they burst?" asked Mrs. Peck, without evasion.

"The strain is considerable," I replied.

"The foot," said Mrs. Peck. "The foot!"

"Now, then," she said briskly, "you say he is in a critical condition."

"The situation," I replied, "is bad."

"That is what I wanted to be sure of," said Mrs. Peck. "Now, what are we going to do?"

"What? He is of any use for me to warn Mr. Peck?" I inquired.

"Not the slightest," said Mrs. Peck.

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better than he had—less jaded. But he also seemed somewhat subdued—dazed. I was myself. But Mrs. Peck presented a perfectly hard surface.

To the women of the audience Orlando J. Heckel was a surprise also. He was dressed in a square, close-buttoned reefer coat; wore a flaring tie—a blue tie, as red-headed men always do, when nature asserts itself, with large white polka dots. He held his enormous chest well forward, moved his papers on the table with great vigor. If there was surprise in the room, he did not share it.

"This is Dr. Heckel," said Mrs. Peck, introducing him. "As you know, he is one of our greatest living experts on the Dance. You know everything this year is the Dance. A new art—the newest. Dr. Heckel will tell you about it. He calls his lecture 'The Joyous Art of Dr. Heckel.'"

She was a woman of abrupt words, in all situations.

Mr. Heckel, by whom I had seated myself, wiped the perspiration from

such effect, why not others? And with this came a sense of kinder, sweeter, and more tolerant appeal from the lecturer.

He outlined his hopes—his great ambition. Millions indulged in the dance in New York alone—smirching it, degrading it. It must be purged, lifted again to its old estate. The dance instinct must be satisfied. How, but with the normal dance?

It was health, science, art—the earliest art, the latest—absolutely the latest of woman's arts.

Many eyes rested upon the convincing argument in classic draperies by his side. The orator bore along his audience. Mr. Heckel had the gift of tongues with women.

Mr. Heckel sat down, suddenly, bathed in perspiration. And, almost as suddenly, Mrs. Spencer Oelrichs Peck was on her feet.

"You have heard Dr. Heckel. All I want to add is this: We all know what dancing has become in our cities—here in New York. Most dangerous."



They were a magnificent couple.

his forehead. "The first time she ever introduced any one, to my knowledge," he whispered to me.

That was the year, you remember, when the town was overrun with that rush of barefooted dancers. Mr. Heckel was explained. Nothing could be entirely unexpected from that quarter.

There was the padded patter of kid gloves, rustling silences, the strange, unnatural hush of many women. Mr. Heckel unrolled his wide, flexible mouth, and gazed at his audience with an air of tremendous sincerity. He seemed almost angry.

"When I look at you women, what do I see? He suddenly exclaimed. "Health—joy, normal living? Do I see these?"

He paused. A sense of shock swept the delicate gathering.

"Do I see these in society women? Do I?" demanded Mr. Heckel again. "Quite the contrary. Why not? Let us go to fundamentals. What is woman? What is your business in the world? You are the child-bearers—are you not? Very well!"

"Take nothing from me. Ask yourself: What is my meaning to the race? You know well. Through you the race projects itself to future. Our bodies are our temples—the temples of our race. Now, I ask you," shouted Mr. Heckel, "what have you done with your temples?"

His ferocity still held them. They seemed dazed.

"What is your health?—your health? Health!" said Mr. Heckel. "Ah, now we approach the center."

From this, of course, it was a short step through Greece and Rome to the Joyous Art of the Dance. Mr. Heckel advocated it widely—for all classes of society. He showed the attractiveness, the novelty, of the movements which he had developed, following closely the lines of the classic dance—especially of his Dance to Apollo.

Toward the end the lecturer became more persuasive. The attractiveness of his model, and her illustrations of what was possible with his ideas of the classic dance, won general sympathy. If one woman could pose with

Dr. Heckel believes all this could be changed—offset by the establishment of his normal dancing everywhere. He is anxious to see the experiment tried. And so am I.

There was decided interest at this. "The first time," whispered Mr. Heckel to me, "that Mrs. Peck has ever interested herself in social uplift."

She sat down. A tall woman, just in front of her, got up.

"This thought has come to me while listening to Dr. Heckel," she said. "Why would it not be a fitting thing for us here to organize a pageant, a classic dance among ourselves, for raising funds toward this movement?"

"I had thought of that," said Mrs. Peck. "And I wish to say now that, if there are any ladies who desire to do this, my ball room is at their disposal."

Doubt was over. A rustle of excitement spread across the room. There was an event. Not for three years, since the celebrated Shepherdess Ball, had the Spencer Heckel ball room been open to society.

"I suggest," said another woman, "that we take advantage of this generous offer at once."

Mr. Heckel, still bearing an expression of doubt, stood watching them from his corner as I left.

It was only the next morning that Mr. Heckel arrived in my office.

"Doctor," said Mr. Heckel, "I come to ask you, as a dispassionate man, what is your opinion of Dr. Heckel?"

"In what way?" I asked.

"In the first place," asked Mr. Heckel, "is he a doctor?"

"I can't find that he is," I said.

"He is not," repeated Mr. Heckel ruminantly.

"No. He may be a Ph. D., perhaps," I said. "I can't fathom him," said Mr. Heckel. "A most remarkable man in many ways. A tremendous man. You know how seldom Mrs. Peck takes any one up—any one. And you have witnessed his influence upon her now. You saw, too, their first meeting, a week ago. An extraordinary man. I can't understand him."

"You see him," I remarked, "occasionally."

"No," said Mr. Heckel, "not now. He has dropped me entirely since this new matter—since Mrs. Peck took him up. Yes; he now tells me that he must focus his spirit temporarily on his larger work. That is his expression."

"I see."

"And he always expressed particular interest in my case," said Mr. Heckel in a pained voice.

"You are very fortunate," I said. "Fortunate?" repeated Mr. Heckel.

"I should have hated to see you stricken with apoplexy," I explained. "You don't think his system of exercises advisable, then?" asked Mr. Heckel. "They seemed to me most rational and convincing."

"Not with aging arteries," I replied. "Ah!" said Mr. Heckel.

"They rupture so much more easily as we grow older," I said.

"I see," said Mr. Heckel, lapping his lips. "As a matter of fact," he added, "you must be interested to know that I have not been very regular in my running these last few days."

When he was gone, I felt that Spencer was saved. The energies of Mr. Heckel had been focused successfully on the larger work.

My own here were little indications of this. The next few days I had two or three men ask me casually, "Who is this Orlando J. Heckel the women have got hold of?"

The note deepened a little, as days went on. The time was exactly appropriate to Dr. Heckel's appearance.

A dancing craze was sweeping through the town—one of those periodical amusement epidemics that run through New York. And the barefooted dancers trod every stage. If some women could dance barefooted on the stage, why not others?

The unrest among the men grew noticeably. "For God's sake," I overheard one man I knew saying to an acquaintance, "have the women gone mad? Who is this fellow, this Heckel?"

"I don't know, but he certainly has introduced some new ideas."

"New ideas? He has got my wife dancing around the house in one of those kind of loose, allegorical gowns, with her hair down, half her waking hours. For her health, it seems, and practicing for a public dance. Where did the man come from, anyhow? Where did Becky Peck get hold of him?"

There wasn't any light on the subject. All that the members of that inner circle knew was that all of a sudden Mrs. Spencer Oelrichs Peck waved her arms, this figure rose up out of the dark, and half its female population jumped into motion, like a medieval village struck with dancing madness.

The Sunday newspapers took it up, of course, and splashed it over full pages—with a picture of Dr. Heckel. Dr. Heckel now, always. New York had brought forth another of its great social experts. Dr. Heckel proposed the folk dance, the classic dance, the dance of nature for the schools, the work-shops—all the children of all the people. Regiments, armies of youth dancing cross-legged dances in the public parks, were about to be seen, with Dr. Heckel leading. Dr. Heckel, that acknowledged expert in the dance, introduced and backed by society—by Mrs. Spencer Oelrichs Peck, in whose celebrated ballroom the fabulous spectacle of the Dance to Apollo was to be given.